

INVERSE WRITING IS A DISEASE WITH THIS WOMAN.

She Practiced It Unconsciously in Letters to Friends From Abroad, and Is Now Under the Care of a Specialist. He Calls Her Trouble a Kind of Amnesia, Due to Nervousness Brought On by Fatigue and Excitement, and Thinks She Will Recover.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

A young woman prominent in Gotham social circles, and of wealthy parentage, is under the care of a New York specialist, Doctor Carden Simon, for a strange nervous affliction. It is claimed as something akin to amnesia, and her attacks resemble amnesia, pending the question of which she writes inversely.

The doctor says the trouble is due to the separation of the nerve cells in that portion of the brain controlling the written thought. He knows of only one other case of the kind.

The young woman's name is suppressed. It is only known that her first name is Ella. Recently she has been traveling in Europe, and it was in letters from European capitals that she first gave evidence of her trouble. These letters she wrote wholly or in part, inversely—that is, the formation of the characters and words was as if written in the usual way on the reverse side of the sheet and viewed through the paper.

Her friends were puzzled at first. They did not know how or in what language the letters had been written. It was only when one of the recipients accidentally held her letter before a mirror that the key to the puzzle was discovered. The mirror reversed the inverse writing to a normal position, and it was then easily read. Then her friends thought it was only a clever joke perpetrated by a clever girl.

A few days ago Miss Ella returned from her foreign trip. She had hardly reached her home when the friends who had been receiving her queer letters began to congratulate her on the success of her joke, and to wonder how in the world she had been able to write so well in that way.

"I tried to do the same thing," said one, "and I just couldn't. I wrote my name that way, but it didn't look like anything, even when I held it before a mirror. How do you write that way?"

"That's just what I want to know," said another. "And you must do it so easily, or you couldn't write those long letters that way. How long did you have to practice?"

"It looked just like some type I saw once when I went to a newspaper office, and my cousin Jack showed me through. And I couldn't read that at all," said a third.

Miss Ella looked puzzled at the first question, bewildered at the second, and worried at the third.

"Why, my dear girls, what are you speaking of?" she asked.

"Oh, don't try to get out of it," answered one. "You ought to be proud of it. I would, I am sure."

"It was so clever," laughed one of the others.

"And Jack says you are the only one in our set that could have done it," said the third.

"But, really, I don't know—I don't understand you," insisted Miss Ella.

"Why, it's your letters," said one. "My letters? Was there anything unusual about them? I know I write an awful scrawl, but there is nothing clever in that. You girls don't write any better than I do."

Miss Ella was not so puzzled now, but she was piqued.

Her friends, too, were piqued. The conversation threatened to become frightfully formal when one of the girls drew a letter from her purse.

"You see, my dear, we really couldn't understand it until I threw it open on my dresser and then accidentally noticed that the mirror reflected it in its proper shape."

Miss Ella took the letter, looked at it a moment and turned to the last page. There she saw, written "right side up," "Yours, Ella."

"Did I really write that?" she asked.

This was carrying the joke too far. The callers were becoming decidedly indignant. And they showed it in their faces and in their cool behavior.

Then Miss Ella began to cry.

The upshot of it was that Ella explained that she did not have the slightest recollection of having written her letters in an unusual way. She did not mean to, and she could not account for it. She remembered what was in the letters, and she remembered that she wrote to certain girls from certain places at certain times. But she did not remember having written inversely.

She was probably distressed and showed such signs of hysteria that the next day Doctor Simon was called to see her. She explained her whole case to him. She said she had been sighing so busily that she was completely run down, and at times was extremely nervous. She showed the physician some of the letters she had written, and asked him to please tell her what had caused her to write down that way.

The physician was puzzled. He told her he did not know; for this physician was frank. He couldn't understand the case at all. Nor could he understand how his patient could write in such a way. He tried it and failed most miserably. He crossed his 't's and dotted his 'i's at the wrong end, and wrote backward when he should have written with a decided forward slant. But he told Miss Ella to take a certain powder and to rest very thoroughly, and he would come back the next day.

Doctor Simon was very much interested in the case. He remembered to have read in a many old medical books of a case similar to this one, and he looked the book up. There were points of dissimilarity between the two cases, and they complicated matters. In the case that was recorded, the man who was afflicted was clearly a victim of paroxysm; in this case he knew there was nothing of the kind, or at least that if there was it was in its incipient stage, but after many hours of study and research and consultation, he decided that his first diagnosis was correct. The young woman

was very nervous from the excitement and fatigue of the foreign trip, and her nervousness had taken this peculiar avenue of manifestation.

The first page of one of the letters written by the young woman is shown here. It was written from Copenhagen last March, and it will be noticed that the address and first few lines are reversed. The original, held up to the light with the writing on the side of the paper opposite the reader, shows that the words are:

"MY DEAR JOHN—
"MY HOTEL IS CROWDED WITH
"AMERICANS, ALL ENGLISHMEN."

The rest of the letter is written in the usual way.

"You will observe that the formation of the characters in the reversed lines is very steady," said Doctor Simon. "The reason for this is explained by the words in the body of the letter: 'My nervousness is much better.' She was evidently wholly unconscious of the fact that just above these words she had given undoubted proof of very acute nervousness. The writing in the body of the letter is much more steady than in the preface."

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